The role of political parties and interest groups in East Africa community Federation process (2001-2011)
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Abstract:
The East Africa Community made up of the territories of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and newly admitted Rwanda and Burundi have declared their intention to politically federate into a political entity to be known as the East Africa Federation (EAF). The consolidation process into a federation was initially set to come into place by 2013. In 2004, the summit of the East African Community, made up of the head of states and Governments of the member states formed 'the Committee on Fast Tracking East African Federation (also called the Wako Committee)' to explore the possibility of fast tracking the consolidation into a political federation, The Committee proposed a 2010 fast track date for the federation. The actualization of that process has not happened 2 years after the proposed fast track date, and the East Africa Community (EAC) seems set to miss the initial 2013 date for a political federation. This failure to meet the proposed fast track dates of 2010, and the likely failure to meet the 2013 date's calls into question the underlying causes of the failure. This study will propose that the varying level of engagement by key interest groups, such as trade lobbies (during the initial integration process that had an overwhelming economic integration theme) and political parties, in the federation process (which is a distinctly political stage) is one of the key underlying factors undermining the actualization of the EAF. The thesis will posit that, the federation being a distinct political process will require the support and engagement of the plurality of political players within the territories of the community and at the regional level. This has been lacking in the case of East Africa Federation process and as such, absence of this critical pre condition for success in a federation has undermined and will continue to undermine the viability of this project for the East Africa Community territories. Lack of participation, and interest in the project by key interest groups, including political parties, undermined the realization of a political federation by the 2010 proposed fast track date and will continue doing so and undermine the proposed 2013 timing for the federation of the territories of East Africa.